FINAL REPORT

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SASKATCHEWAN BISON ASSOCIATION MARKETING INITIATIVE

February 2004
Funded by the Agri-Food Innovation Fund

Prepared by: Saskatchewan Bison Association

AGRI-FOOD INNOVATION FUND

Canada

Saskatchewan

Final REPORT

PROJECT: *AFIF 98000216*
SUBMITTED: *March 31, 2003*
SUBMITTED BY: Nial Kuyek, *EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR*
SASKATCHEWAN BISON ASSOCIATION

(a) SUMMARY

The primary objectives of this project are three-fold:

- **to increase awareness of the province's bison industry within Saskatchewan, Canada and throughout the world**
- **to allow the Saskatchewan Bison Association to play an active lead role in development of a national bison check off program in Canada to facilitate industry-supported research and marketing efforts to drive further development of the bison industry**
- **to increase knowledge of the handling and preparation of bison meat products by Saskatchewan chefs and others in the food service industry**

(b) TECHNICAL REPORT

Background and Objectives

Funding was approved to "concentrate on development of check off, chef-training program and Internet set-up and maintenance."

Activities, Achievements, Papers Written

i) **The Canadian Bison Marketing Council (CBMC) was established as the entity for research and marketing for the Canadian bison industry financed by a national check off or levy associated with the sale of CCIA ear tags for bison. The Saskatchewan Bison Association has one representative and 3 delegates to the CBMC. The CBMC office is located and operates from the national Canadian Bison Association (CBA) office location in Regina. This provides the opportunity for ongoing communications and collaboration between CBMC, CBA, and SBA.**

ii) **SBA has continued to work closely with chefs and others in the food service industry in Saskatchewan in its efforts to raise awareness of the qualities of bison meat and its potential as an alternative red meat. Partnerships with leading chefs in Regina and Saskatoon have been used for the preparation and sampling of bison meat at high-profile food and trade shows. In 2002, this included participation at Taste of Spring in Regina in April and the Premier 2002 Food, Wine and Spirits Show in Saskatoon in September. Inclusion of bison on the menu of CHAB Radio's 50th Anniversary celebration, the Royal Red Host Committee BBQ, and the "Saskatchewan**

event" at the 2003 Canada Winter Games in New Brunswick were also key accomplishments in this area in the past year. In March of 2003, SBA sponsored a chef's demonstration and sampling of bison in partnership with the Sherwood Co-operative Association at their new Quance Street store in Regina.

iii) Bison meat products had the strongest presence and profile ever at Canadian Western Agribition 2002. The Saskatchewan Bison Association undertook two initiatives in the Prairie Cuisine area of the Lower Queensbury to introduce value added bison meat products to rural and urban consumers and to enhance the profile of bison overall at Agribition 2002. The objective was to put rural and urban consumers across the counter from the bison producers who have the knowledge, expertise, and passion about bison. The volunteer efforts of over 80 SBA members from all parts of the province made this possible. First, in the trade booth area, SBA volunteers provided samples of bison garlic sausage and marinated bison strips with over 250 kilograms served over the six days. Second, in the concession in the Lower Queensbury, SBA volunteers, assisted by Chef Gregg Krauss, served over 1700 hot bison daily specials over the 6 days.

iv) The SBA Marketing Committee has been active over the past year in assisting with the planning and organization of the Agribition initiatives and reviewing member requirements for marketing and promotional material that will enhance their marketing efforts.

v) SBA hosted a dinner with several representatives of the All China Federation of Supply and Production Co-operatives and the Canadian Co-operative Association to introduce the Chinese visitors to bison. Bison was the meat ingredient to six Canton and Mandarin style dishes that were served family style to the group. It was an excellent event and has generated further interest by the Chinese.

<u>Results and Conclusions</u>

Results - As above

Conclusions - Project ongoing

<u>Indications for Further Development</u>

i) SBA will continue to promote participation by Saskatchewan bison producers in the national bison check off program. The program is "mandatory and refundable". SBA's goal is to ensure that members understand the importance of the check-off and take interest in the role and direction of the CBMC.

ii) SBA will continue to disseminate the Bison Resource Manual for Food Service. As well, SBA will continue to work closely with established and emerging chefs and restaurateurs to establish a food service niche for bison meat in Saskatchewan. The manual has been instrumental in assisting retailers in marketing their products through restaurants, nursing homes, and other institutional outlets. Other promotional items that can be used by retailers and marketers will be made available at cost from the SBA, CBA or CBMC.

iii) The SBA's intention to upgrade its web site to keep it current and relevant was not achieved in the past year and remains a priority for the coming year. It is intended that this upgrade include improvement in overall information delivery, a marketplace for members to advertise goods or services, and a virtual warehouse for a few select items that SBA will market.

iv) SBA will participate in Taste of Spring, Premier 2003, and Agribition to introduce bison, as a meat product, to more consumers and to increase awareness of the bison industry overall.

v) As restaurateurs, retailers, and farm-gate marketers are expressing interest in information on the handling, processing and preparation of bison meat, SBA will explore options to develop appropriate training opportunities.

Information on Performance Indicators

The Saskatchewan Bison Association has experienced healthy growth of its member base, bison prices are recovering in the marketplace, there is increased slaughtering and processing of bison in Saskatchewan, and new value added bison products are being introduced to the marketplace.

(c) PERSONNEL

Bob Ford (to July 31, 2002) and:
Nial Kuyek (Executive Director-SBA)

(d) EQUIPMENT

Necessary computer equipment to accommodate web-site maintenance has been supplied by SBA.

(e) PROJECT PHOTOS

Not applicable to this project.

(f) INNOVATION FUND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

AFIF support for creation of the Association's web-site and in production of the Bison Resource Manual for Food Service is formally acknowledged wherever appropriate. Regular progress reports to SBA members at Association events recognize AFIF support through this project.